

THE
PRESBYTERIAN EDUCATION REPOSITORY.

1853.

ARTICLE I.

DEFICIENCIES AND MEANS OF SUCCESS IN
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.*

BY THE REV. E. BICKERSTETH.

CHRISTIAN education is a most important part of every parent's duty, and the root of innumerable future blessings. It is common to hear complaints, that the children of pious parents disappoint the expectations which are usually, and not unnaturally formed; and it is true that this is too often the case; and that in some instances children piously educated, will, when they break through the restraints of education and habit, become excessively wicked; and they may even, like Eli's and David's children, perish in their wickedness. In these extreme cases, there has probably been either some serious neglect of parental duty, or the formation of unhappy connexions with others; at least every Christian parent is dumb before God under such awful dispensations, and is feelingly alive to the conviction of his own sinfulness.

But, after all, the mass of Christian piety in a country will be found to be in the generation of the pious; and though God shows his own sovereignty in raising up, sometimes, an eminent instrument of good from among the most wicked, he also shows the riches and the faithfulness of his own promises: "The generation of the upright is blessed: Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

It may be useful briefly to notice some causes of want of success, and also to touch upon the means of a successful Christian education.

I. In considering the causes of want of success we must first notice the *disregard of one of the most important religious principles*, a due knowledge of which lies at the root of all success in this work—that all children are by *nature* born in sin, and the children of wrath; that they inherit from their parents a carnal mind, which is enmity against God. However pious the parent, his nature is cor-

* Part of the *Introduction to DOMESTIC PORTRAITURE* of Legh Richmond, &c., by the Rev. E. BICKERSTETH. Republished by R. Carter and Brothers, N. Y. 1850.

ARTICLE X.

CONSIDERATIONS ON A CALL TO THE MINISTRY.

BY THE REV. MATTHEW B. HOPE, D.D., PROFESSOR IN THE COLLEGE OF N. J.

It is becoming more and more imperative, that the attention of the whole Church should be turned to the subject of the Christian ministry. The thoughtful Christian, can scarcely suppress the painful conviction, in view of the statistics of the rising ministry, as compared with the numbers who are crowding into other professions, that many of our pious, and liberally educated young men, are mistaking their duty, in regard to the great question of their professional life: and we need not say how deplorable, on every ground, such a mistake must be. It can scarcely fail to compromise their usefulness, and comfort through life, and their peace in death. In consequence of stumbling on questions of such momentous magnitude, at the threshold of life, men are, doubtless, often baffled in business, and kept under the rod of God all their lives, or perhaps, cut down in the freshness of manhood. It is a solemn thing to stand at the eventful point in life, where such momentous interests are hanging in the balance.

We, therefore, ask the attention of our readers, and especially of such as may be called either to examine the subject as a question of personal duty, or to counsel others in such cases, to some thoughts, suggested by much intercourse with young men preparing for the ministry.

I. The first point, is the *nature* of "a call to the ministry." Notwithstanding all the pains which have been taken to define, and distinguish the different kinds of "call"—extraordinary and ordinary, general and special, there is still great confusion resting on the subject. Indeed, we have thought that the very multiplication of these distinctions, has a tendency to confuse the mind: and as the subject admits of a perfectly simple exposition, without any reference to the forms of a 'call,' which are of no practical use, because they do not apply to ordinary cases at all, we shall omit them entirely.

A call to the ministry, then, is simply *an expression of the divine will, that a man should labour in the work of the ministry.* Let us explain. The chief end of every man's life should be to glorify and enjoy God. In the great scheme of creation and providence, God has fitted all his creatures, with perfect wisdom and goodness, for the accomplishment of this end. He has given them diversities of gifts, bodily, mental, and spiritual; and has assigned to them corresponding spheres, for the development and exercise of these gifts. One man is fitted for one sphere, and another for another. Now it is this designation of God to a particular class of duties, or mode of life, as revealed by his personal gifts to each individual, which constitutes, what is termed on that account, "his calling." Such is the

clear intuitive recognition even in the popular mind, of this truth, that God designates men to their work in life, primarily by the gifts which he imparts, that when a man undertakes to perform duties for which he is evidently unqualified, we express our conviction by saying, he has mistaken his "calling." Now this principle, or conscious inward conviction, thus wrought into the very structure of our language, is alike applicable, whatever the profession may be; whether in the Church or out of it. It implies that there is an expression of the divine purpose, or will, in the one case as well as the other. It is the interest of every man, as it is the imperative duty of the Christian, in view of his professed allegiance to Christ, to seek in the light of this guiding principle, his proper calling of God, as a lawyer or a physician, a merchant or mechanic, as truly and as earnestly, as if he were to be an office-bearer in the Church. The word of God is clear to this point, that all Christians, as well those who are devoted to secular duties, so called, as those devoted to sacred, should have but one object—the glory of God; and but one guide—the will of God. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

In reference to the offices of the Church of Christ, the same principles clearly obtain in the New Testament. In the striking and beautiful simile of the apostle, the Church is likened to the complex human body, in which the members not only differ from one another, while each is essential to the whole, but the office and function of each are determined by their fitness for the purpose. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the Church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles; then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." (1 Cor. 12: 27–28.) "Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy, according to the proportion of faith: or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth on teaching: or he that exhorteth on exhortation." (Rom. 12: 6–7.)

And these gifts are expressly referred (1 Cor. 12: 4) to the Holy Spirit as their author, and their express object is to qualify those who are so gifted for their respective duties. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man, to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; to another, faith, by the same Spirit," &c. These scriptures seem to settle these two points, as to the spiritual offices of the Church:—1. That individuals are designated to these functions, by the Spirit of God, which designation constitutes, essentially, the "call" to that office: and, 2. That the will of the Spirit, or in other words, the call to the office, is expressed in the peculiar fitness imparted by the corresponding gifts.

We must not allow ourselves to be confused by the distinction, often insisted upon in this connexion, that these were *extraordinary* endowments, and, therefore, no guide in ordinary cases. All the offices described in the passage we have quoted, were not extraordinary; nor were all the qualifications imparted in an extraordinary way. Among them are the ordinary and perpetual offices, designated "teachers," "helps," "governments;" and the "call" to the work of "ministering," of "teaching," of "exhorting," is expressly included. But it is the principle we are seeking after, and that principle is the same, whether the office and the gift are extraordinary, or otherwise. It matters not whether these qualifications are original endowments of nature, or the result of education, or the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, so far as the present inquiry is concerned. They come equally from God in either case; and the object is the same in all. The mere fact of their possession, is the only important fact in the case; and it indicates the design of God with equal clearness, however they may have been imparted.

Accordingly, when the apostle is discussing this point, in his instructions to Timothy and Titus,* we hear nothing of mysterious convictions, and impulses, imparted by direct or extraordinary means. The question of a "call to the ministry," the evidences of which are here discussed formally, and with more fulness, than in any other portion of the New Testament, is treated as essentially a question of qualifications. We would especially recommend to young men to study this apostolic manual, in preference to any other discussion of the subject. We think it will be found, that there is no scriptural ground for the wide distinction, so commonly made between the ministry and other professions, in regard to the question of personal duty, and the importance or the mode of ascertaining the will of God. And the great evil of making such a distinction is, that, in the first place, young men who are eminently fitted to adorn the ministry, are deterred from examining its claims, under the impression, that a call to that office is a mysterious something, which puts the question of the ministry upon a different footing, from every other question of Christian duty; and, therefore, wholly overlook the obvious considerations, which in the light of reason and scripture guide us in all other cases, in determining upon the great questions of life and usefulness. And in the second place, it is to be feared that imaginative and enthusiastic, but weak-minded men, under the conviction that they have a special call, independently of any fitness for the work, press into the office, to the discredit of the ministry and the injury of religion.

II. If we have arrived at any clear conception of what the fundamental element of "a call to the ministry" is; and if it is,—not an extraordinary interposition of Providence, tantamount to an express voice from heaven, not a mysterious secret impulse, which leaves scarcely a possibility of mistake,—but simply an expression of the will of God, manifested in the fact that he has fitted every man for

* See 1 Tim. 3: 1-7; Titus 1: 5-17.

some specific sphere of duty, which is to be ascertained in the case of the ministry, just as the conscientious Christian ascertains any other duty:—if these things are so, then we are prepared to take up the next great inquiry, How one should proceed to *ascertain* what the will of the Lord concerning him is. We will suppose that he has found peace in believing, is rejoicing in the glorious relation of a child of God, and with the ardour of first love glowing in his heart, the inquiry breaks from his lips in the honesty of devotion, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” He has no will but Christ’s, and his chief object is to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever. It is a matter of the very first importance to possess this honest, open frame of mind. Without this there is no security of divine guidance. If he has secret, selfish preferences,—lingering desires after the honours, or influence, or emoluments of the world, he should, first of all, go to the Cross, and there stay and commune with Christ, until his soul is filled with light and love, and all other objects have faded from his view. And there, in the very presence of Him who died for our sins, and lives for our justification, let his single inquiry be, how he can most glorify God. Whatever may be the result as to his future profession, the exercise will be profitable, and its influence will be felt throughout eternity. If, with the sweet and hallowed scenes of the Cross in view, he should be brought to the conclusion that God calls him into some other profession, he will labour in it, with aims, and feelings, and results, which will invest it with charms scarcely less captivating, and a glory scarcely less resplendent, than those of the ministry itself. O, if Christians were careful to seek communion, and “take sweet counsel” with Jesus, before deciding the great questions of life, the Church would not have to sit down in sackcloth and sorrow, to mourn over the deplorable lack of ministers, while other professions are crowded to suffocation, with her own gifted sons, pressing forward in the race of genius, for the distinctions of wealth and of power. And those, too, who should embark in secular callings,—as many unquestionably still would,—with sanctified aims and talents consecrated to the high objects of Christian duty, would spread a hallowed influence through all the walks of life, and contribute only less than the ministers of the altar, to the coming of the Redeemer’s kingdom.

Supposing, then, that the young Christian’s aim is single to the glory of God, and his honest desire is to know his duty, we need hardly remind him how necessary it is, to seek the guidance and aid of the Holy Spirit by *earnest, humble prayer*. This, indeed, is our only safe course in any of the difficulties and doubts of life. But, it is, if possible, more necessary in the case of the ministry, because the qualifications for the office are, in a peculiar sense, the gift of the Spirit; and his presence, to guide, strengthen, comfort, and bless, is indispensable to success. Indeed, we are persuaded that very few, even among devout and praying Christians, have full and adequate faith in the certainty with which God will lead by his Spirit,

in the way they should go, all those who humbly wait upon him in believing prayer. He sheds light into the mind, which enables it to perceive the relations of things, and the force of reasons, which would otherwise be obscure and uncertain. There is nothing miraculous, or mysterious, or uncommon, in this. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he will, by the ordinary influence of his Spirit, pouring light upon the common operations of the mind, make your path perfectly clear, and direct your steps with unerring safety.

But, in the second place, we are to use our *understanding and reason*, according to our best judgment of things, in deciding upon our duty. We are not to expect, either in answer to prayer, or otherwise, such an interposition of God, as will dispense with this. It is by shedding divine light upon our own mental operations, that He ordinarily guides us to the truth. On our part, therefore, while we may confidently expect the direction of God, it is as much an operation of reason and common sense, as the decision of any other question of duty. We are not to depend upon blind or unreasoning impulses. Our decision should rest upon clear and rational grounds.

The evidences of duty which the inquirer is to weigh, in the best exercise of his judgment, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, and on the broad principles of the Scriptures, are chiefly, in the first place, the circumstances in which Providence has placed him in relation to the demand for ministerial labour; and, 2dly, his qualifications for the work,—including natural endowments of body and mind,—the results of education and training,—and the gracious fruits of the Spirit.

1. The melancholy *fact* that “the harvest truly is great, and the labourers are few,” creates a presumption in favour of the ministry, which should arrest the mind and impress the heart, of every true son of the Church. Even in some parts of our own land, the destitution of ministers is appalling. Among the older and stronger churches, where the comforts of life are so great, this want is not so severely felt. And the existence of a considerable number of ministers who are unwilling, or unfit, to grapple with the difficulties and self-denials of weak churches, or frontier and destitute regions, and who, consequently, rush with eagerness to every opening that offers them a comfortable living, has produced the impression, to some extent, that the supply is excessive. And it may be true that of this class of ministers we have enough, and to spare. But, notwithstanding this apparent surplus in certain places, some of whom have already, and perhaps honourably and usefully, fulfilled their ministry, and others have evidently, from their entire unfitness for the work to be done, mistaken their calling; there are yet, even in our own favoured land, vast multitudes who have no ministry, and no means of grace, from any evangelical denomination, to break the force of the cry of destitution. We have recently passed, for example, through a strip of territory, near the middle of these United States, in some places nearly a hundred miles wide, and three hundred long,

comprising from fifty to one hundred thousand souls, where not a single Presbyterian Church exists, and we were told not an evangelical minister of any kind was to be found;—where well-grown youth had never heard a single Gospel sermon, and could only, with difficulty, be made to recognise the Bible, as a book containing a curious story about a flood of rain, which lasted forty days. And then, in our great West, it is no uncommon thing to have whole counties, and sometimes several of them, embraced in a single parish. And all this is in the very heart of this great continent,—in the future seat of power of this mighty nation, whose influence upon the destinies of the world no man can fully conceive. And the urgency of the case is still greater, when we reflect upon the immense rapidity with which the population of that rising empire is increasing; and the prodigious efforts which infidelity, and popery, and false religion, and delusion, in a thousand shapes, are making to gain the ascendancy over evangelical Christianity. No language can adequately describe the mighty issues which are pending upon the struggle between truth and error, which is now in progress upon the vast battlefield of this great continent. And it is hardly necessary to say, that the conduct and the result of the struggle, depends, under God, more upon the supply of able, well-trained, and devoted ministers of the Gospel, than upon all other causes combined.

And, to make the case, if need be, still more urgent, at the time we are penning this plea, the number of pious young men in our colleges, pursuing a course of liberal study with a view to the ministry, is not only failing to keep pace with the increasing demand of this rising empire, but is absolutely *on the decrease*. Surely, if there be any divine significance in history, the voice of God in facts like these, should speak to the hearts of consecrated young men, calling them, as with trumpet tones, to the field where the empires of light and darkness, of sin and holiness, of God and Satan, are preparing to rush into conflict for the destiny of the world.

And when we “lift up our eyes, and look upon the fields already white unto the harvest” *in foreign lands*,—where whole nations have been thrown upon the Church, nothing could be more preposterous than the idea that the supply of devoted ministers is excessive, when measured by the deficiency of the means of salvation. On the contrary, in view of the appalling destitutions of our perishing world, on the one hand, and of the clear scriptural testimony, on the other, that the salvation of men is to be effected through the foolishness of preaching, it appears to us indisputable that there is no position in which a young man, whose gifts and training point him to this office presumptively, can hope to do so much for the welfare of men, and the glory of God, as in the faithful discharge of the duties of the ministry.

2. The presumption on these grounds, would seem so strongly in favour of devoting his life to this work, that the main inquiry should force itself upon his attention, whether his *gifts and training* are not

such, as to indicate that God has designed him for a work of such magnitude and responsibility. It would be impossible to discuss in this article, as they deserve, those qualifications which may be regarded as constituting a presumptive call such as we have indicated. We will endeavour, however, to present a brief general view of those which are most essential.

(1.) The first, and most important, is **PIETY**. This, indeed, is not peculiar to the minister of religion; but while other professions may be successfully pursued without it, it is absolutely *indispensable* to his office. Unless his heart is wholly in his work, he cannot hope to be either useful or acceptable to others, to any great extent; and we can scarcely conceive of anything more wearisome and repulsive, than it must prove to himself. On the other hand, if he has drunk deeply into the Spirit of Christ, and if his life is sustained by constant communion with Christ, there is no possible employment, this side of heaven, so full of pure and elevated enjoyment.

But personal considerations, decisive as they are, are yet the least important of those involved in the question of ministerial piety. The last and bitterest curse which God inflicts upon his people, is to deliver them into the hands of an unconverted ministry. We cannot find language to express the whole strength of our convictions on this point.

It is obvious, however, that no young man should consider himself exempt from the service, on the score of deficient piety, without taking the alarm. It is a fearful thing to excuse oneself from the most useful, the most ennobling, the most Christ-like service, permitted to mortals, for the want of sufficient piety. Can any young man set up the objection before us, against the presumption we are discussing, without raising the question, not "Ought I to be a minister," but, "Am I a Christian?" What is it, we would affectionately ask, to be a Christian? Do not the very lowest terms of discipleship imply supreme devotion to Christ? What an apology to offer at the judgment-seat, for burying in the pursuits of earthly objects, talents which might have adorned the Church, and blessed the world, that he had no heart for the work of the ministry. We would kindly, but earnestly, submit to our young Christian readers, whether this is not dangerous ground to halt upon.

(2.) Next on the list of qualifications, we mention that assemblage of moral qualities, which command the confidence of men, and which go to form a character for **ENTERPRISE AND INFLUENCE**; without which, a minister is a useless encumbrance, if not a reproach to the Church. It is not every pious man, that is morally fitted for the ministry. There may be, even in the case of good men, such constitutional disqualifications, either moral or intellectual, or both,—and that too, without impeaching either their piety or their soundness of mind,—as would render it wholly inexpedient and improper to assume an office of such responsibility. The full success of the ministry, especially in this day, requires a character not only blameless and consistent, but strong and enterprising. There are many respectable

and valuable men who, on this ground, clearly have no call to the ministry.

The apostle describes these moral qualities so fully, that we need only transcribe the passage (1 Tim. iii. 2-7). It will both explain and commend itself. "A bishop, then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, nor covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." Such, in a moral point of view, should be the minister of the Gospel; and yet there is here no exaggeration of requirement, no lifting of the standard above the reach of human attainment. The requisition is simple, moderate, and indispensable.

(3.) The next qualification in point of importance, is suitable mental endowments:—"APT TO TEACH."

The power of the Christian ministry, as a means in the hand of the Spirit, depends upon the ability to present with clearness and force, the great truths of salvation. To do this with a reasonable hope of success, requires good mental endowments. We know, indeed, that the Holy Spirit does sometimes employ the weakest agents, to confound the mighty, but even in the divine economy, both of the Old and New Testament Church, with all the advantages of inspiration and miracle, this was but the exception, and not the general rule. And in our day it would be utter presumption, and the extreme of folly, for any Church to neglect this qualification, in the supply of her regular ministry. The days of miracle are past, and we are now to act upon the best suggestions of wisdom and common sense. And while we admit and contend, that the spirit of Christ in the heart, is the first and indispensable qualification of a true ministry, yet the influence and usefulness of any Church, which teaches the truth, will be in proportion to the ability and learning of her ministry. There have been times and places where this qualification was less indispensable; but this age is too portentous, and this land too important, in the mighty conflict of truth and error, to justify any other than a highly gifted and well-trained ministry of Christianity.

In all common cases, among us, we are clear that no man should consider himself called to the ministry, whose mental endowments would not command the respect of intelligent men. The good which may be done by weak men, is at too great expense, if the standing and influence of the ministry at large, should be compromised in any degree. We are not insisting upon genius, so called, or towering intellect, as essential to a call to the ministry, but a *sound mind*, of competent vigour to handle the great themes of the Gospel. These

sober, substantial qualities of mind, are far more useful than the fitful powers of eccentric genius. It cannot be expected that every minister should possess the highest grade of *intellect*, but soberness and strength of mind, are indispensable. If the apostle had written exclusively for our day, he could not have set forth the qualifications of a ministry with more discrimination than he has done (Titus i. 9). "Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, *that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*" Nor has change of times diminished in the least, the force of the reasons which demand such a ministry. "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching the things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." At a time, and in a land where liberty tends to licentiousness, and infidelity and false religion stalk abroad, and impudently challenge the credentials and faith of the true believer, it were folly to entrust the defence and propagation of the Christian faith to others than men of clear, strong, well-trained, and well-furnished minds.

(4.) This suggests, in the fourth place, the remark, that a GOOD EDUCATION, or the opportunity of acquiring it, is, in general, an indispensable condition of a call to the ministry. This is not the place to argue this point. It has always been held as settled, by the Presbyterian Church. A well-educated ministry of religion, has always been the ordinance of heaven, from the earliest records of history to the present hour. The educational provisions of the tribe of Levi, the schools of the prophets, the scribes, and doctors of the law, among the Jews, the personal training which Christ gave his apostles, the celebrated schools of the early Church, and the universities and colleges of later and present ages, all of which were expressly founded and designed for the suitable education of ministers, and often in the face of almost incredible difficulties, bear a most remarkable and unbroken testimony, to the settled judgment of the Church on this point, in all its dispensations. The necessity for such a ministry is sufficiently apparent from the reasons already stated. And whatever may be the action of other denominations, the fixed policy of our own puts it out of the question to become a minister in her communion, except in very rare and peculiar cases, without a suitable training.

To strengthen her testimony still further on this point, as well as to remove the obstacles from the path of her sons, our Church has not only scattered throughout all her borders, institutions of learning; but she has a permanent and efficient organization, in her BOARD OF EDUCATION, for the express purpose of giving a thorough training, *gratuitously*, to those who are poor, but who, if educated, might be suitably qualified for the work. No young man is debarred from the privilege of preaching the Gospel, for the want of means to procure the necessary education. If the Presbytery, to which his church may belong, are satisfied, on full examination, and after a sufficient trial, of his capacity, if they believe that he has the requisite quali-

fications, and that it is his duty to prepare for the ministry, the Board of Education will, in every case, furnish the means; on a very limited and economical scale, it is true, but yet sufficient to enable him, with industry and devotion on his part, to acquire the necessary training.

While this admirable provision of our Church calls for lively and grateful joy, it gives us occasion to press with increased earnestness, the importance of a high standard of qualification in talents, education, and character, and to resist kindly, but firmly, all tendency on the part of unsuitable men to take advantage of such facilities. While it calls upon those of rich native gifts, who would otherwise have been exempt from the obligations of the ministry for want of the means to obtain an education, to examine the subject of duty in a new light, the effect should be, not to lower, but rather to elevate the standard of character; because it widens the range for the selection of suitable candidates.

While, therefore, this provision of our Church argues strongly her sense of the want of a great increase of ministers, it shows, at the same time, her determination, at all hazards and at great expense, to have a ministry of able and well-trained men.

We have now before us a brief and general view of the leading considerations, which go to decide the question of personal duty to the ministry. In view of such responsibilities, we should not wonder if the modest inquirer were disposed to shrink from giving an affirmative answer to the question, "Ought I to become a minister?" Humility is generally an accompaniment of true worth, and those who have the best gifts, are not unfrequently the least conscious of the fact. We should rather see one shrink, in view of such requirements, than boldly lay claim to their possession. It will, therefore, be a real relief to one who rightly appreciates his responsibility, to be told that a question of so much difficulty and delicacy does not rest wholly and finally upon his own decision. If, under an humble sense of his unworthiness and dependence, in the faith and love of his Master, his heart stills clings to the work, and he ventures to hope, that with the promised grace of Christ strengthening him, he could do more for his glory in this than any other calling, his next duty is to consult his minister, and ask through him the *judgment of the Presbytery*. After all, the question turns upon their decision; for the great Head of the Church has made their judgment authoritative and final. Here is the ultimate refuge, and to this he may fly with all the confidence of divine guidance, inspired by the repeated promises of Christ that he will be with his Church by his special presence, and so preside over their decisions on all questions pertaining to the welfare of his people. This is the true and complete relief, of which every sensitive and conscientious young man not only may, but ought to avail himself, in view of the solemn responsibilities of the question before us.

III. Before dismissing the subject, we wish to notice two or three points which are sometimes represented in a form which we cannot but think is liable to mislead the conscientious inquirer.

1. Among the evidences of a call to the ministry, it is common to insist upon a *strong pre-existing desire for the work*. Some, we fear, have been led to imagine, that if a man is really called of God to the ministry, he will have some secret, unaccountable, and irresistible impulse, leading him to seek that office; and, on the other hand, if his inclinations point to secular employments, or if they do not even bear down all his natural desires for such employments, including, of course, their rewards, so fascinating to the youthful fancy in the form of wealth, popularity, or power, it is a clear evidence that it is not his duty to become a minister. The whole question is made to turn, in effect, upon the secret spontaneous promptings of the heart under all the disadvantages of worldly seduction. This is delicate and dangerous ground. It is certainly true that no man ought to enter the ministry unless he can throw his heart into the work. He ought to sympathize fully with the estimate of the Apostle, "If any man desireth the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." But the whole value of this desire, as an element of ministerial character, and an evidence of a "call," depends upon its nature and object. Perhaps our meaning may be rendered clear by the following remarks: 1. The mere desire to become a minister is, in itself, no evidence of a call. Many persons have this desire strongly, who are wholly unfit, and clearly uncalled. It sometimes exists without any assignable cause; not unfrequently it dates back to childhood, and springs from early associations; and more frequently, perhaps, it is the kindling of the youthful fancy with the fire of ambition. Such a desire is manifestly of no account, in settling the question before us. 2. A candidate for the ministry should, undoubtedly, have an intelligent and high appreciation of the ministry as "a good work;" such a feeling as would lead him to engage in and pursue it with delight when once assured that God has fitted him for it. He should desire it, not as a means of influence, or emolument, or reputation; but as a means of glorifying God and saving souls. The true desire is that which springs from the love of God in the heart, and seeks the glory of God in the salvation of men. It is evident, however, that these are substantially the feelings which any pious man might well be supposed to have. Whether this desire really points to the ministry, must depend so entirely on other considerations, such as the motive from which it springs, and the qualifications or gifts with which it is found united, that its value in determining the question before us, must be very subordinate at best. 3. The absence of this strong desire to be a minister, prior to and independent of a rational conviction of duty, can never be safely accepted as conclusive evidence, in any case, that God has not called him to preach the Gospel. We cannot see but the opposite belief is precisely akin to the more common form of religious fatalism, which

alleges the necessity and the unfailing efficacy of the call of the Holy Spirit, as a reason for neglecting the necessary means for making our calling and election sure. In the one case the effect is to throw off all personal responsibility in the matter of our general disciplinship to Christ, on the ground of an alleged intrinsic efficiency necessarily inhering in the divine call, while, in the other case, the same thing is done, and for the same reason, in the matter of our special call to a particular form of obedience. If there be any difference in regard to the justifiableness of the two, it would seem to be in favour of the first, as involving all the difficulties of the latter, and a great deal besides.

And besides, the principles on which we are commenting are contradicted by experience and history, as palpably as by this analysis of their grounds. Did not Moses, and Jonah, and Jeremiah evince great reluctance to accept the call to their specific ministry, and yet were they not really called? We can see no reason why a man may not be deficient in his spirit of obedience and love with reference to the ministry, as well as any other Christian duty. To suppose otherwise, would be to make a man's zeal the measure of God's claims, and to cancel every duty which he has not the heart to perform. And above all, in a country like this, where the avenues to wealth, and distinction, and power are open to almost any young man of respectable abilities, and especially of cultivated mind, and where the ministry is pre-eminently a work of unrewarded toil, often of pinching want, and sometimes of bitter reproach; who that knows the human heart would be willing to rest the question of duty, upon the existence of a strong innate impulse, an ardent, invincible desire, irrespective of a well-ascertained and solemn sense of duty?

2. Again—this topic has an incidental application to other parties than the young men themselves, which we may be pardoned for touching upon as we pass. Some, otherwise judicious and sensible persons, seem to suppose, that if God calls a man to the ministry, it will be so clear as scarcely to need inquiry on his part, and that all who are really called, will be shut up to a sense of their duty, whether they will or not. Hence we have known pious parents conscientiously to abstain from saying a word on the subject, to a gifted and promising son, although they were intensely desirous that he should become a minister. An excellent clergyman once said in our hearing, that he thought no young man should be allowed to enter the ministry, who could be kept out of it. Surely this must be a mistake. Why may not a young man mistake or decline a plain duty in regard to this point, as well as any other. God can, indeed, make a man willing in the day of his power, but so he can in regard to repentance, or faith, or any other duty. But does this furnish a guarantee that no one will be left to neglect any duty to which God really calls him? Is not such an opinion, we repeat, of the essence of fatalism? And if it is evidently untrue in its application to common duties, what is there to make the ministry an exception? We admit, indeed, that

there ought to be no *undue* or *improper* influences exerted, to lead any young man into the ministry, contrary to his own sense of fitness or duty. We should deprecate and deplore anything of this kind. But why may not a judicious, and pious parent counsel his son, whom a thousand temptations and allurements may beset, on this, as well as any other subject? Why may he not represent to him the claims of the Master upon his *talents*, just as much as upon his heart; and especially in a case, where unholy desires or worldly pursuits are so liable to mislead him? To urge him contrary to his own conscientious convictions, would be wrong; but to lay the whole subject clearly before him, and see that it is duly considered, to counsel and to pray with him on this most momentous of all questions of life and usefulness, is no more than duty demands of every pious and judicious parent.

In point of fact, is there not every reason to believe, that many men do bury their talents in the earth, or appropriate them to their own personal emolument, who, under a clear and just view of duty, might and should have devoted them to the service of Christ and the salvation of souls, in the work of the ministry. Otherwise, would not our Lord's parable of the talents be without meaning or force? There is such a thing as finding our skirts stained with the blood of the slain, because we neglected to warn them of their danger at the mouth of the Lord.

3. There is another thing which appears to mislead some inquirers:—we mean an indefinite impression that the office of the ministry is something so awfully sacred, that if a man should err in assuming its functions, however conscientiously he may have acted, he would thereby incur far more guilt, and far more danger, than if he should decline the office altogether, even in disregard of a possible call to the work. The case of Uzzah, who was smitten with instant death, for giving an unwarranted touch to the ark of the Lord, is frequently quoted, to illustrate the guilt and danger of entering the ministry uncalled. And the passage (Hebrews v. 4), "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron," is often cited, as though its primary and proper application were to the subject before us. Now, we need hardly say that neither of these passages can have any other than a remote relation, and that only by way of accommodation, to the ministry of the Gospel. And, indeed, the analogy between the positive ceremonies of the theocratic economy, which were guarded, for obvious reasons, by the severest penalties, and even the analogy of the ancient priesthood, with the office and duties of a minister of the New Testament,—a simple teacher and ruler in the Church,—is so extremely remote, that the circumstances of the one can scarcely be used to illustrate the other, even by way of accommodation, without great danger of misapprehension. And, in point of fact, the result of the impression made by these very passages thus applied, we have reason to believe, has been to cause some young men of unusual religious sensibility, though

gifted with great but modest worth, to shrink from the very thought of entering the ministry, lest they should incur the presumptuous guilt and punishment, of placing unhallowed hands upon the ark of the Lord. We think this peculiar and extreme fear of presumption is exaggerated on the one hand, and that it should embrace equally the danger of erring on the other side of the question. The call of Moses or Jonah strikes us as furnishing a much closer analogy to that of the ministry, than the case of Aaron or Uzzah; and disobedience like theirs, we fully believe, is a much more frequent cause of divine displeasure and chastisement, than the unauthorized assumption of the duties of the gospel ministry.

We are very far from meaning to say, that a man may not incur the anger of God, by pressing presumptuously and uncalled into the ministry; and still more by assuming its duties in the spirit of self-confidence and vain-glory; or, more emphatically still, with ambitious and worldly views. On the contrary, we can scarcely find language to express our sense of the guilt and danger of such a course. Such a minister can expect nothing but the frowns of God upon his person and his work: and that, instead of walking in the light of the Divine countenance, and blessing the Church by his labours, his heart will be hardened, his mind darkened, his plans thwarted, and his hopes blasted, under the displeasure of God. But, the same thing may befall him, if he is a child of God, out of the ministry as well as in it. And he may expect that God will leave him in darkness, and confound his projects, and meet him with chastisement, or perhaps overwhelm him with afflictions, or even cut him down in the flower of his life, just as certainly, if he runs away from his duty, as if he should assume the office uncalled. And in view of the allurements to wealth and distinction in other professions, we cannot but think there is far more danger of the former, than of the latter mistake,—especially in the case of young men of brilliant gifts.

4. It may be asked, perhaps, whether the views now presented would not make it the duty of every pious young man, of good mind, and of suitable education, to enter the ministry. We answer, by no means. Our object has been, as we have stated already, not to shut up every such young man to the necessity of becoming a minister of the Gospel, but to lay the question of obligation before him in a form that would command his most serious and prayerful investigation. We have sought, first, to strip the subject of those adventitious considerations, which have withdrawn it from the same class with other questions of religious duty, and erected it into a class by itself, invested with a sacredness so awful as to be, in effect, almost repulsive. We believe that God "calls" many of the gifted sons of the Church to serve him in other professions and other spheres of life, as well as in the ministry of his Son; and that he will so make it appear, to those who truly seek his guidance in faith and prayer. In labouring to establish the claims of the ministry on the sanctified talents of the Church, upon the same footing with the varied and distracting ques-

tions of Christian life and Christian duty, we are very far from intending to drag down the office of the ministry, to the low level where personal ambition is engaged in clamorous and unholy strife for secular rewards. Our earnest prayer is, rather, that we may be instrumental in lifting some, at least, of our choice young men, from the low and selfish aims which now too often lead them into secular professions, and to place them by the side of those who are inquiring, in an humble and reverential spirit, at the mercy-seat, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" We would not degrade the ministry from its lofty elevation, or abate, in the least jot, the spirituality of its requisitions; but we would have every youthful disciple of Christ to feel, that he is bound to carry the very same spirit of reverential devotion, and of humble, prayerful waiting upon God, into every walk of life, into which the providence of God may "call" him. We would not strip the ministry of its peculiar honour and dignity, above—far above,—every other vocation of human life; and still less would we seek to rob it of its sacredness: but we would have all to remember that they are not only, in an important sense, ministers of the grace of Christ to the impenitent and the perishing, whatever their profession may be, but kings and priests unto God for ever. It is not the ministry, but the *question of personal duty with reference to the ministry*, that we would set down upon the same level of Christian obligation, to be settled by the very same principles which should guide the disciple of Christ, in all the great questions of his life. With reference to the one and the other alike, we would have him to feel, that the one, sole, governing principle of his life, should be that of the Apostle (Rom. 12: 1), "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Only let the right spirit take possession of our young men, let the same mind be in them which was also in Christ Jesus, and we shall not be called, so constantly as we now are, to mourn over talents buried in the earth,—ascension gifts adapted and designed for the edification of the Church, desecrated to heated rivalries for wealth, fame, or power; blighting the spirituality of our sons, and blasting the hopes, which might have blossomed and ripened into the fruits of everlasting blessedness.

We see no reason, we repeat, either in the nature of the office, or in the guarantees of any special guidance, grounded on the directness, or explicitness, or Divine interposition, express or implied, in a call of God to the work, for abating our anxieties or our convictions, on this solemn and momentous point. We are impelled, therefore, to speak out by our sense of the vast importance of the ministry to the temporal and spiritual well-being of our own land, and of the world at large,—by our anxious desire to prevent, if we may, the calamitous consequences of a mistake to those who are personally implicated in the matter, and the sad results which must accrue to the cause of Christ in the earth,—and by our profound and painful

sympathy with those whose eternal salvation hangs, in all human certainty, upon the decision which this question shall meet at the hands of those whom we humbly, but most earnestly address. Surely these considerations are weighty enough to justify the plea which we are striving to enforce upon the conscience, and Christian feeling, of our pious and educated young men, for an examination, or, if need be, a *re-examination*, and a settlement of this question, in the light of the plain and palpable principles of Christian duty, where we have endeavoured to place it.

ARTICLE XI.

CHRIST AS A TEACHER, AN EXAMPLE TO HIS
MINISTERS.

BY THE REV. SHEPARD K. KOLLOCK, D.D., OF GREENWICH, N. J.

WE read in Roman history that during the commotion of the civil wars, under the consulship of Marius and Cinna, Mark Antony was proscribed, and that soldiers were sent to despatch him; but when they were about to kill him, he pleaded for his life so eloquently, that he disarmed them of their resolution, and tenderly melted them into tears.* A similar, but far more important event is related by the Evangelist. When the Jewish Senate proscribed Jesus of Nazareth, and sent officers to apprehend him, and bring him before them, they were utterly vanquished, not by the forcible arguments of a man pleading for his life; not by a feeling address directed specially to them, but by one of those ordinary discourses which were announced to the people at large. Though these officers had learned to suppress the relentings of pity; though they were exposed to danger the most imminent for the neglect of duty; yet such was the discourse of him whom they would make their prisoner, that their hands and hearts were bound, and they returned to the Council without the Galilean, and alleged, as their excuse, "*never man spake like this man*"—a most convincing testimony of the unrivalled excellency of Christ's preaching.

He was incomparably the greatest and the best teacher that the world ever saw—in this, as in everything else that he undertook, "he had the pre-eminence." He might have appeared in the world as the "man of sorrows;" might have wrought the miracles which were recorded of him; might have made an atonement for sin upon the

* —"Quæ etiam Marianos Cinnanosque mucrones, civilis profundendi sanguinis cupiditate furentes, inhibuerunt; missi enim a sævissimis ducibus milites ad M. Antonium obruncandum, sermone ejus obstrupecti, dstrictos jam et vibrantes gladios cruore vacuos vaginis reddiderunt. Quam disertum igitur eum fuisse putemus, quem ne hostium quidem quisquam occidere sustinuit, qui modo vocem ejus ad aures suas voluit admittere." *Valerius Maximus*—Lib. VIII., cap. ix. 2.

See also *Velleius Paterculus*—Lib. II., cap. xxii. 3, and *Plutarch*, in his *Life of Marius*.